

Stuttgart ACS offers free translation service

By Maria Higgins

For help with the language that spawned such words as *Geschwindigkeitsbegrenzung* and *Bodensee-wasserversorgung*, head to Army Community Service for free German translation services by community volunteer Sarah Young.

Young can explain what those two tongue twisters mean ("speed limit" and "Lake Constance Water Authority," respectively) as well as help decipher utility bills, letters from landlords and other documents written *auf Deutsch*.

She will also help English speakers write up newspaper advertisements or other documents that need to be presented in German.

A Vaihingen native, Young said she is also glad to assist community members in their search for shopping options, ethnic restaurants, off-base car repair facilities, English-speaking veterinarians and numerous other services in the area.

In addition, she will assist with telephone calls to German-speaking persons or businesses.

"I know what it's like to be new to an area and not know where to go or how to get things done," explained Young, whose marriage to Army Sgt. Scott Young has at times put her in a similar situation.

"We have desperately needed a service like this," said ACS information and referral specialist Andrea Diaz.

Diaz noted that Young volunteered at approximately the same time Army Family Action Plan panelists recommended such services be made available, "so it was a very happy coincidence," Diaz said.

The mother of a 2-year-old, Young will work part time at the Army Community Service office on Patch Barracks' Washington Square. Her office hours are Tuesdays, 9 a.m. to noon, and Thursdays, 1 to 4 p.m.

Community members are welcome to either call for an appointment, stop by during her office hours, or drop off documents needing translation anytime. In the latter event, ACS staff will telephone when the information is ready to be picked up.

For now, Young will not be able to field requests via e-mail.

To date, Young has handled projects as simple as translating menus into English and as complex as helping a Stuttgart-based family apply to the German government to have a family member admitted into the country from the Ukraine.



Young

Courtesy first word when asking a colleague to translate

It may be tempting to regard that friendly local national colleague as a walking dictionary whenever the need arises for German-to-English translation, but etiquette and common sense should be the first words when making such a request, advised a Civilian Personnel Advisory Center official.

"It's a gray zone – most people won't mind at all if you ask for help, but don't expect that they can always drop everything right then to take care of you," said Heidi Bause-Tonkus, labor advisor for CPAC.

Bause-Tonkus said she is not aware of there ever having been a complaint by a local national feeling inundated with extracurricular translations, but suggests steering clear of potential friction nevertheless with the following guidelines:

- Be considerate of a colleague's workload and deadlines. Nonessential matters may have to wait for a lunch break or a big project's completion.

- Don't expect a word-for-word translation of a multi-page document. It should suffice to receive the general gist of an item and a heads-up on any follow-up action required.

- Don't shoot the messenger. "Sometimes people make you feel like you're responsible" when you translate a letter telling them their phone is being disconnected, Bause-Tonkus said.

- Take up complex medical and legal matters with qualified translators in respective offices. Staff Judge Advocate, Housing and other departments all have trained specialists who can better help.

- Be tactful. "Nobody minds helping if you're not pushy about it," Bause-Tonkus said.

- Maria Higgins

Young cautioned that the only assistance she is not able to provide is exact translation of complex medical and legal forms. Americans faced with such documents should seek help from an official translator certified by German authorities, she said.

To make an appointment with Sarah Young call ACS at 430-7176/civ. 0711-680-7176.

Support programs to stay accessible throughout Europe

U.S. Army Installation Management Agency

Local contact information

Stuttgart

ACS: 430-7176/civ.
0711-729-7076

MWR: 421-2809/civ.
0711-729-2089

Garmisch

ACS: 442-2777/civ.
08821-750-777

MWR: 442-2658/civ.
08821-759-658

While units deploy to support the global war on terrorism, soldiers, civilians and family members remaining in Europe will have access to the same services they have come to expect in their military communities.

Families can feel confident that the range of Morale, Welfare and Recreation activities and family support services through Army Community Service will continue in the months ahead.

ACS provides a variety of support systems and programs, including the Family Readiness Group, Family Readiness Liaison Officer and Family Assistance Center.

Family Readiness Groups

Family Readiness Groups are composed of family members, volunteers, soldiers and civilians from a particular unit or organization who come together to provide mutual support, assistance and communication.

Extended families, and other interested community members are also welcomed. Membership is automatic, and participation is voluntary.

Overall, FRGs give a sense of belonging to the unit and the Army community. They provide a way to develop friendships, and share important information and moral support during unit deployments.

FRG activities provide a better understanding of military life, the unit, and its mission.

Family Assistance Centers

Family Assistance Centers are the central point for services for family members during deployments or crisis situations. FAC staff members help family members find the right agency to resolve any issue.

Usually operated as an expanded Army Community Service Center, the FAC also has workbooks, checklists and other materials to help those facing family separations.

Family Readiness Liaison Officers

In addition to FACs and FRGs, the Family Readiness Liaison Officer has specific duties to ensure such services as financial counseling, family counseling, housing assistance, and tax advisors are available for families and soldiers who need them.